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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAMA 000611

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/19/2029

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [IR](#) [AF](#) [BA](#)

SUBJECT: AFCENT COMMANDER'S MEETING WITH CROWN PRINCE  
SALMAN FOCUSES ON IRAN

REF: MANAMA 599

Classified By: CDA Christopher Henzel for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: During USAFCENT Commander Mike Hostage and CDA's October 12 meeting with Crown Prince Shaikh Salman bin Hamad al Khalifa, the CP assured them that Bahrain would keep the pressure on Iran to live up to the commitments it made in Geneva (reftel). Lt Gen Hostage explained that the threat posed by Iran was leading the U.S. to pursue a Regional Integrated Air and Missile Defense (RIAMD) strategy with GCC countries. Shaikh Salman welcomed this and stressed that Bahrain wanted to be part of the solution to the GCC's defense integration challenges. Lt Gen Hostage and the Charge thanked him for Bahrain's commitment to contribute a small contingent for the effort in Afghanistan. End Summary.

IRAN AND REGIONAL AIR AND MISSILE DEFENSE:  
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¶2. (S) On October 12, U.S. Air Forces Central (USAFCENT) Commander Lt Gen Mike Hostage and Charge d'Affaires called on the Crown Prince. The CP commended COMAFCENT for now being forward deployed to Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar because it was important to spend time with the U.S.' counterparts in the Gulf. If more U.S. troops were added into Afghanistan, and Iran tried to delay the process begun in Geneva, Shaikh Salman commented that there would be tough months ahead for the region. As the P5 1 pursued its carrot and stick approach with Iran, Salman wondered if Tehran would pursue a "tit for tat" in its military posture. Because of the lack of sophisticated intelligence gathering among the Gulf states, the CP observed that the press "plays a propaganda war into our psyche." He decried Iran's interference in Iraq.

¶3. (S) Lt Gen Hostage explained that, because of the threat posed by Iran to the region, his primary goal was to work on establishing Regional Integrated Air and Missile Defense (RIAMD) between the U.S. and the GCC states. First, this involved integrating the U.S.' own air and missile defense assets (Navy Aegis, Army Patriots, etc.). Then he would offer to link each Gulf state into a Shared Early Warning (SEW) Common Operating Picture (COP), to the extent that each government was willing to participate. The U.S. would share the same picture to all, and each could add as much information as it liked, while keeping data it did not wish to share behind a secure firewall.

¶4. (S) The CP responded that this would be the largest game changer because it would be a permanent fixture and would affect Iran's ability to project power. He thanked the U.S. for the two U.S. Patriot batteries stationed here and said he would like to help further integrate the Gulf states into RIAMD project because it would not be enough without everyone's participation. He cautioned, however, that the

U.S. would have to lead the effort and it would have to be bilaterally with each government, with a multilateral system as the long-term goal. He asked whether and where the U.S. would deploy a THAAD (Theater High Altitude Air Defense) system to the Gulf. Gen Hostage replied that the location was not yet certain, but yes, THAAD would be deployed within a year, and would prove to be a very capable mid-course intercept system. Prince Salman worried that, in an attack scenario, Iran would try to swarm and overwhelm specific targets and we would all have to be ready for that.

15. (S) Lt Gen Hostage pointed to the Air Warfare Center in the UAE as a Center of Excellence (COE). A COE for RIAMD could be established there as well as a training vehicle to help the Gulf states get comfortable with the technical solutions so they could share information. Shaikh Salman said he wanted Bahrain to be part of the solution. He noted that Bahrain had been the first GCC government to participate in Task Force 152 and it liked to be a leader. "Consider us serious partners," he stated.

IRAN: TO DEGRADE OR DETER?  
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16. (S) Lt Gen Hostage asked for the CP's views of Iran's willingness to deal in good faith with the P5 1. Shaikh Salman said his views had not changed - Iran's behavior would continue to be problematic. However, he speculated that the reason Iran had changed course and cooperated with the P5 1 in Geneva was due to Russian President Medvedev's comment at UNGA that sometimes sanctions were unavoidable. CDA pointed

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out that as the P5 1 pursued a dual track strategy of engagement and preparing for sanctions, the GCC countries' roles would be important. Confirming that Bahrain would do what it could to keep the pressure on Iran, the CP lamented that Gulf countries had few levers on China. He thought that if Saudi Arabia were to sell more oil to China, it would help provide some leverage.

17. (S) The CP asked whether Russia had shipped its S-300 air defense system to Iran yet. Lt Gen Hostage said no. Salman said he was sure that the international community would have to wait until the next election in Iran to see real internal changes. The regime was still in firm control and Ahmadinejad was consolidating his power, even as the economy was failing. The world would need a strategy led by the U.S. "We are still a ways away from knowing whether force is necessary," the CP stated.

BAHRAIN'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE EFFORT IN AFGHANISTAN  
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19. (C) The CP asked whether the U.S. was changing its goals in Afghanistan to a strategy of reconciliation and power sharing with some elements of the Taliban while targeting senior Al Qaeda figures. Lt Gen Hostage said a way had to be found to let the Afghans live in their, not our, version of peace, but he wondered whether it could be done on our timeline. Shaikh Salman counseled patience as with the implementation of the surge in Iraq. Lt Gen Hostage and Charge thanked him for Bahrain's commitment to contribute a company from its security forces to provide inner perimeter security at a coalition base in Afghanistan. Shaikh Salman stated that his father King Hamad had approved a budget of USD 13 million for the deployment the day before, so the troops would have the necessary equipment.

110. (C) The CP asked whether the U.S. would still need to deploy aerial refueling tankers to Isa Air Base. Lt Gen Hostage related that AFCENT's problems with the Manas Air Base (Transit Center) in Kyrgyzstan had been resolved.

HENZEL